

The poor Red Cross Society seems to have got itself into a good deal of a muddle. The President, Mr. Roosevelt, will have none of it; those who object to anything that Miss Barton happens to think, are thrown out of it; and there you are! Miss Barton seems to have had herself elected for life and to have skillfully arranged things so that she is practically the whole society, the custodian and the spender of its funds, and responsible to no one save Miss Barton. A few poor, misguided ones who objected to the way the concern was being mismanaged, and who had the temerity to file a written statement of their protest, were bodily thrown out, a few months ago; they are still languishing without the radiance of Miss Barton's smile. There seems to be a general, though mistaken belief that this Red Cross Society is semi-official, and that it has some connection with the International Red Cross Society. This is quite far from the actual truth. The Red Cross Society in this country is entirely a private and unofficial enterprise. Originally it had considerable life and did a good deal of good; latterly it has shown every indication and symptom of being badly affected with the disease known as dry rot. Miss Barton is a very estimable old lady; but she is too old for the society, and too thrifty; either the age or the thrift has lead her into making a number of very serious blunders in the past few years.

The matter of preparing a full card file of all who practice medicine within the State of California is not a small undertaking, but it is desired to have it satisfactorily done. In New York, New Jersey and Connecticut the great value of such a file has been demonstrated; in Illinois work on a similar card file has been commenced; other States are about to undertake the work. One thing is exceedingly desirable; all these State files should be identical in form. The ultimate usefulness of such a series of card files will be very greatly enhanced if they are all along the same lines and all conform to one general style. Therefore it should be the intention of each State society to make use of the forms and cards suggested by the American Medical Association. A further argument in favor of their use is that the Association is prepared to furnish them at a figure much lower than they could be bought elsewhere. It is quite possible that some of the various individuals who may have charge of this work in different States may have ideas of their own in regard to the form of card to be used, and the data to be gathered, etc. Original ideas are very good things to have, but a full and complete system is a whole lot better. A poor plan consistently carried out is worth a good deal more than a number of very excellent

ideas imperfectly carried out. Bear this in mind if you should be tempted to harshly criticize the form of cards used or the information which you are requested to give, and restrain your natural resentment because it is not just as you would have it.

A CHECK TO LEGALIZED BLACKMAIL.

It is astonishing how little the average professional man knows about legal medicine or medical legislation. There seems to be even some apprehension entertained of bringing matters of medico-legal interest before meetings of medical men and to have discussions thereon. This fully explains why some very important legal matters pertaining to the medical profession are in a most deplorable condition. This deplorable condition is only possible through lack of knowledge; it is the apathy and the aversion toward discussing medico-legal subjects that allow the perpetuation of such abominations as, for instance, the present status of expert witnesses and expert evidence.

Another abomination is the defraying of the costs of a jury trial, as practiced heretofore; and yet the medical fraternity never made any move to have this changed. Possibly from spite, from malevolence, or with the intention to extort money from a doctor, an irresponsible party engages a lawyer to institute a damage suit for alleged malpractice. A decent lawyer, an honorable member of the legal profession, will decline any participation in a "legalized blackmail" scheme; but there are too many lawyers who are just looking for such an undertaking. To make the unsavory trio complete, a member of the medical profession is needed who is willing to encourage and to aid with his evidence, the case of the legalized blackmailers. Then the case will be dragged before a jury. There are also too many medical "confreers" who do not hesitate to stultify themselves by becoming promoters of these low, contemptible practices. The result of this "triple alliance" is the alarming increase in actual suits for alleged malpractice and the frequent attempts at legalized blackmail.

In a jury trial thirty-four dollars has to be deposited every day into the hands of the bailiff of the court by both parties; twenty-four dollars for the twelve jurors and ten dollars for the shorthand reporter. That money will always be easily forthcoming. People may profess poverty when they have to pay the honest services of a physician, but when it comes to suing a physician they will always get the necessary money. Besides the deposition in the bailiff's hands there is very little actual expense connected with this nefarious business. The filing of the necessary papers is cheap enough; the lawyer takes the case on a contingency fee.